

# USAID Helps Improve Accountability and Patient Safety in Albanian Public Hospitals



*Photo: Hospital Staff Discussing Patient Medication Administration Record*

Until recently, the practice in public hospitals was to record the time when the physician orders the medication. The actual time when the patient receives the medication and the name of the staff member administering it was not a part of the medical record. This is a critical data element providing indispensable information and benefits. First, it provides evidence that patients have actually received their medication as prescribed. Second, it introduces effective accountability mechanism for an essential staff duty and strengthens patient safety by reducing medication administration errors. Last but not least, it improves the health system transparency by establishing a record linking the multimillion hospital procurement and distribution of pharmaceuticals with its beneficiary - the patient.

With support from the USAID funded Enabling Equitable Health Reform project, public hospitals in Albania embarked on effectively changing its medication administration practices. The change started in the context of a long-term hospital management and administration strengthening effort piloted at the regional hospitals of Lezha and Korca and the Maternity Hospital No.1 in Tirana. Discussions with the staff and leadership of the two regional hospitals on patient safety and pharmaceutical management were conducted, followed by trainings on management of pharmaceuticals and medication administration recording. As a result, the staff and leadership of the hospitals showed genuine interest and enthusiasm in improving their current medication administration and management practices.

The regional hospital in Korca piloted the initiative by effectively implementing the new medication record. The hospital added a line to their old patient record where nurses register the time when the drug has been administered and a sign off on the record. The Lezha Regional Hospital followed suit shortly. Nurses were trained in the new practice and the two hospitals proceeded to order new patient records reflecting the new rules on medication administration.

Recognizing the benefit of piloted changes in the patient record, the Health Reform Implementation Support Group, an institutionalized health reform advisory board to the Minister of Health, has recommended the introduction of medication administration in all public hospitals. The nationwide implementation of the medication administration record will improve patient safety, strengthen the transparency in the health system and the accountability of medical staff. It will ultimately contribute to improved health care service delivery and increased satisfaction of patients with public hospitals.